



ISSN 1181-6465

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 29 February 2012

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 29 février 2012

**Standing Committee on
Estimates**

Organization

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Organisation

Chair: Michael Prue
Clerk: Valerie Quioc Lim

Président : Michael Prue
Greffière : Valerie Quioc Lim

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 29 February 2012

Mercredi 29 février 2012

The committee met at 1609 in room 151.

ELECTION OF CHAIR

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Good afternoon, honourable members. It is my duty to call upon you to elect a Chair. Are there any nominations?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I nominate the member for Beaches–East York, Michael Prue.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Mr. Prue has been nominated. Do you accept the nomination, Mr. Prue?

Mr. Michael Prue: I do, with thanks to my nominator.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Are there any further nominations? There being none, I declare the nominations closed and Mr. Prue elected as Chair of the committee.

Mr. Prue, would you take the chair?

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): I'll now entertain nominations for the position of Vice-Chair.

Mr. Rob Leone: I move that Mr. Natyshak be appointed as Vice-Chair of the committee.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Natyshak, do you accept?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: With thanks to my nominator, I do accept. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Are there any other nominations for the position of Vice-Chair? Seeing none, Mr. Natyshak is elected.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much.

APPOINTMENT OF SUBCOMMITTEE

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Okay. We now have to have a motion to appoint a subcommittee on committee business. That involves one member from each party. We'll entertain motions. Mr. Craitor.

Mr. Kim Craitor: You sure you want one?

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Subcommittee? We have to have one.

Mr. Kim Craitor: All right. Just checking.

I move that a subcommittee on committee business be appointed to meet from time to time at the call of the

Chair or at the request of any member thereof, to consider and report to the committee on the business of the committee;

That the presence of all members of the subcommittee is necessary to constitute a meeting;

That the subcommittee be composed of the following members: the Chair as chair, Mr. Dhillon, Mr. Leone and Mr. Natyshak; and

That substitution be permitted on the subcommittee.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Okay, we have a motion. Any discussion? No discussion. I'll put the question: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

BRIEFING

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): The next item is the briefing by staff. We have the committee clerk and research officer here. They will describe for you briefly what the estimates committee does. It's a very exciting committee: You get to delve into a lot of government business.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Thank you, Chair.

My name is Valerie Quioc Lim, and I am the committee clerk. I'd like to take a few minutes to give a brief overview of the committee and explain my role, and then I will turn it over to Anne Marzalik to speak briefly about her role in the committee.

The estimates committee is one of three standing committees involved with the financial accountability cycle. The estimates process is the process through which the government asks the Legislature to appropriate funds required to meet its financial obligations and to implement programs the Legislature has already approved.

Within this estimates process is the committee stage, and that's where you come in. As soon as the estimates are tabled in the House—that's usually in the spring—and as soon as supplementary estimates are tabled, they are deemed to be referred to this committee. By a process set out in standing orders 59 to 66, the committee selects the estimates of some ministries and offices to be reviewed or scrutinized and sends the unselected estimates back to the House.

During this review process, the minister and ministry staff appear before the committee to present their estimates and answer questions from committee members. Background material is also provided by each

ministry; this is required by the standing orders. The committee then has until the third Thursday in November to present one report to the House on all the estimates it considered.

This process I just described, along with the committee's procedural and administrative practices, is explained in more detail in the committee resource binder, which was sent to your office. I hope you've already received it. My contact information is on the back page, so please feel free to contact me. You can even speak to my assistant, Marie, with any questions.

As committee clerk, my role is to provide confidential, impartial procedural advice and to provide administrative support to all members of the committee.

Quickly, just to point out some of the staff that we have here: Committee meetings are regularly staffed by a Hansard reporter, who you see here to my right, and a broadcast and recording operator who controls the microphones from back there. Meetings here in room 151 are also staffed by interpreters, who you see at the booth right over there.

Again, please contact me should you have any questions about the committee or if you require any assistance. I look forward to working with you all.

Now I give the time to our research officer, Anne Marzalik.

Ms. Anne Marzalik: Thank you. My name is Anne Marzalik. I have an MBA and a background in finance. I'm one of a number of researchers; we all have various backgrounds and specialties. My role is coordinator of research participation in the committee, so you'll see different researchers in attendance here, depending on the ministry that's under review. We try and match the academic background and specialization of the research officer designated to attend the hearings so that they complement as closely as possible the ministry under review. For example, if it's the Ministry of the Attorney General, we would probably have one of the lawyers involved. That's just to let you know you won't always be seeing me in here.

The role of the research service is always to prepare a memo for the committee that lists the outstanding questions raised during the hearings in cases where the minister or the ministry has agreed to get back to the committee to provide a response. So we don't list all questions, just those where the committee has been told a response will be forthcoming.

Secondly, we include with the memo a list of questions that have been tabled with the Chair or the committee clerk during the hearing. So if a member says to the Chair, "I have this question; I would like to table it," the Chair will then proceed to instruct me to include that in the memo. That's a detail you probably don't need to know.

In addition, this is something that we don't always do but it's an option for the members. The committee may instruct the research officer to provide supplementary research. We often find with the estimates committee,

however, that the ministries are in attendance, so we don't get as many requests usually to prepare additional research. Oftentimes, the ministry itself will be asked to provide that information. However, it is a possibility.

Finally, any member of the committee may request confidential research on the expenditure estimates that are prepared exclusively for them. This research would not be circulated to committee. It's between the research service and the member.

That's basically an overview of our role. If anyone has any questions, please let me know. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Are there any questions to the presenters? Any questions? Okay, just to outline exactly when we meet, we meet on—

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): We meet on Tuesday mornings to 10:25 and Tuesday afternoons following routine proceedings, and Wednesday afternoons following routine proceedings. We tend to schedule it at 3:45, but it has to be past routine proceedings.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Okay, just for the newer members of the Legislature, routine proceedings is—as soon as the last petition is done you have to be here, given usually three to five minutes. And then we start. We made an exception today and I understand the reason why, but in the future you need to know that as soon as there is a quorum present, at that time—it may be 3:30, it may be 3:45 or 4 o'clock, depending on whether or not there are ministerial statements and things that happen. But as soon as the last petition is read, that's it; you've got five minutes and then away we go. That's why we have the TV: not to entertain us, but to let us know exactly when that happens. And at 9 o'clock we use the television as well, in the morning when we start. As soon as the Speaker walks in and they yell "Order," that's order here too.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: At 10:25—

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Well, at 10:25—at 10:15, they finish. We don't finish right when the House finishes. We can go right until 10:25.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): So that's Tuesday morning and afternoon, and Wednesday afternoons. Okay?

Welcome back, Mario.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Good to see you, Chair. Looking forward to a good session.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): Well, I think we're going to have lots of fun. This is a very hard-working committee, though. You didn't choose an easy one. If you want an easy one—

Mr. Mario Sergio: We had no choice.

The Chair (Mr. Michael Prue): I don't know if you had a choice or not.

Any other business? No other business. Thank you for attending. Meeting adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1617.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Chair / Président

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York ND)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

Mr. Taras Natyshak (Essex ND)

Mr. Grant Crack (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell L)

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls L)

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest L)

Mr. Michael Harris (Kitchener–Conestoga PC)

Mr. Rob Leone (Cambridge PC)

Mr. Taras Natyshak (Essex ND)

Mr. Rick Nicholls (Chatham–Kent–Essex PC)

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York ND)

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West / York-Ouest L)

Clerk / Greffière

Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim

Staff / Personnel

Ms. Anne Marzalik, research officer,
Legislative Research Service